

Department of Permitting and Environmental Review (Permitting)

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Project Management For Land Use Permits

Permitting Customer
Information Bulletin #**54****• FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS •**

*Visit the Permitting Web site at
www.kingcounty.gov/permits
for more information*

King County Permitting has created customer information bulletins to inform the general public about the effect of codes and regulations on their projects. These bulletins are not intended to be complete statements of all laws and rules and should not be used as substitutes for them. If conflicts and questions arise, current codes and regulations are final authority. Because the codes and regulations may be revised or amended at any time, consult King County staff to be sure you understand all requirements before beginning work. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that the project meets all requirements of applicable codes and regulations.

For alternate formats, call 206-296-6600.

NOTE: The information contained in this bulletin became effective on January 1, 2004.

INTRODUCTION

This bulletin explains the Department of Permitting and Environmental Review's (Permitting) Project Manager Program as it applies to land use permits, or those permits required to clear and develop property in preparation for either above-ground or underground construction (e.g. utility installations). Project managers are assigned to large and/or complex projects with multiple review stations. Project managers are also assigned to all Type II, III and IV Permits. (These permits involve public notice and comment, and may be appealed to the Hearing Examiner or King County Council). The purpose of the project manager is to serve permit applicants as a dependable point of contact, to facilitate communication between the Department of Permitting and permit applicants, improve an applicant's understanding of the permit process, and to generate fee estimates for pre-application meetings as well as for the permit review process and construction phase. In addition, project managers are responsible for managing permit applications through the review process, ensuring that review and inspection schedules remain in line with department and State performance standards. Finally, project managers monitor the hours billed at each review station, ensuring that fee estimates are not exceeded.

The Project Manager Program is a component of the Permitting *Permit Processing Initiative* and seeks to provide customers with an enhanced level of customer service. The program responds to staff and customer recommendations that the permit process should stress predictability for the customer and accountability from Permitting review staff. Although project managers bill at the department's hourly rate, enhanced communication and management of individual permit applications to a specific budget and review time frame can save applicants money in the long run. As always, submitting a quality permit application is the most important thing customers



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can do to ensure that a permit review precedes smoothly. Quality permit applications also ensure that fee estimates are not exceeded.

This bulletin summarizes the Project Manager Program as it applies Type II, III and IV Permits, grading permits, subdivisions, and land use inspections.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND TYPE II, III AND IV PERMITS (permits with public notice and appeal components)

Will all Type II, III, and IV permits require a project manager?

Yes. Examples include Conditional Use Permits, zoning and critical area variances, Reasonable Use Exceptions, Public Agency Utility Exceptions (PAUE), subdivisions, short subdivisions, shoreline permits, rezones, and Special Use Permits.

Type I Permits, or permits that do not have a public notice or appeal element, typically will not be assigned to a project manager. However some Type I Permits (e.g. clearing and grading permits) can be assigned to a project manager under some circumstances.

How will a project manager be assigned to the permit application?

All Type II, III and IV permits require a mandatory pre-application meeting. Once a customer submits to Permitting a *Land Use Request for Pre-application Meeting Form*, the Permitting Services Center assigns a project manager based on permit type and staff expertise. A deposit is paid at the time the request is filed, which covers the cost of developing a fee estimate, staff research and preparation for the mandatory pre-application meeting. The meeting will be held within 30 days from the date of receipt.

What is the pre-application process for Type II, III and IV permits?

- The Permitting staff contacts the permit applicant and presents the cost estimate for the pre-application meeting. This cost estimate is based on project parameters as described in the *Land Use Request for Pre-application Meeting form*.
- Pre-application meetings are designed to prepare customers for the application and review process. Following the meeting, the Current Planning project manager will provide the applicant with a written cost estimate for the entire project review, again giving the customer the choice of whether or not to proceed with the permit review process.
- Assuming the customer chooses to proceed, an intake appointment can then be scheduled by calling 206-296-6797. Customers are responsible for developing and submitting a complete, quality application packet based on the information provided during the mandatory pre-application meeting.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT FOR CLEARING AND GRADING PERMITS

Which grading permits will require a project manager?

The largest and most complicated grading proposals such as surface mines (e.g. gravel pits), large highway expansions, and large pipeline expansions all will require Project Management. Grading permits triggering SEPA review or some other Type II land use decision (appealable to the Hearing Examiner) also will have a project manager. Finally, the highest priority grading code enforcement cases and other standard grading permit applications requiring three or more site review, will receive project management.



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Pre-application meetings and project managed grading permits

There are three broad categories of Project Management designed to accommodate different types of grading permits. They are described below, along with the associated processes for Pre-application Meetings:

COMPLEX PROJECT MANAGEMENT: Complex Project Management is applied to the highest profile and most complicated grading proposals. Examples include surface mines, highway widening and pipeline expansion projects. The earmark of these grading permits is that the pre-application process is phased to accommodate the complicated nature of the proposal. For example, on a highly complex grading proposal triggering SEPA review, the pre-application process would be phased according to the following milestones:

1. **Conceptual Pre-application Meeting:** This meeting would develop cost and timeframe estimates through the threshold determination (establishment of a Determination of Significance or Determination of Non-Significance).
2. **Intermediate Phase:** This meeting would develop the cost and timeframe estimates for the project for an Environmental Impact Statement, as well as for any ancillary Type II Permits required for the project.
3. **Final Review Phase:** This meeting would develop the cost and timeframe estimates for the actual grading permit review.

STANDARD PROJECT MANAGEMENT: Standard Project Management is applied to all major grading permit types, short of the extreme examples outlined above. Examples include grading permits triggering SEPA review and/or proposals which are tied to other permit decisions which can be administratively appealed. Examples could include clearing permits to convert forest land to pasture or some other use; or grading permits to relocate a Class 2-s Stream; or to construct a road across a steep slope. The pre-application process for these types of grading permits follows the steps outlined below:

- A pre-application meeting must be scheduled with grading staff. A deposit is charged to cover the cost of staff research and preparation for the pre-application meeting. **To schedule a pre-application meeting for a grading permit, call the Permitting Services Center at 206-296-6600.**
- Once the pre-application meeting has been scheduled and a deposit collected, the grading project manager will develop a cost estimate for the actual pre-application meeting. This cost estimate will be reviewed with the customer, who can then choose whether or not to proceed with the pre-application meeting.
- Pre-application meetings are designed to prepare customers for the application and review process. The customer also will receive detailed staff notes on all subjects covered. After the pre-application meeting is finished, the Permitting project manager will develop a cost estimate for the entire project review, again giving the customer the choice of whether or not to proceed with the permit review process. Customers are responsible for developing and submitting a complete, quality application packet based on the information provided during the mandatory pre-application meeting.



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MODIFIED PROJECT MANAGEMENT: Modified Project Management is applied to high priority grading violations that do not require a pre-application meeting, but have three or more site issues. A preliminary fee estimate will be provided up-front and at no cost to the customer, which will be based upon average review times for comparable projects. A field check may be required prior to processing the grading permit. During the field check, the number and variety of site issues will be identified and documented. Under Modified Project Management, the Grading project manager will develop a final cost and time frame estimate for processing the grading permit, which will be based upon the specific site issues relevant to the particular project.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND THE SUBDIVISION PROCESS

Background

The subdivision process in King County is broken into the following phases:

- **PRELIMINARY REVIEW:** The Preliminary Review phase is essentially a disclosure phase during which the primary site issues such as sensitive areas, conceptual drainage controls, traffic circulation, and pedestrian safety are discussed relative to a proposed subdivision. The Permitting staff issues a report to the Hearing examiner outlining the major issues and recommending project conditions and appropriate mitigations. After a public hearing before the King County Hearing Examiner, the Hearing Examiner issues a final report which may be appealed to the King County Council. For short plats, the decision and conditions are established administratively. The conclusion of this process is called *Preliminary Approval*.
- **ENGINEERING REVIEW:** The Engineering Review phase examines detailed site plans showing how the required improvements and conditions of Preliminary Approval will be constructed. Lot layout, roads, sensitive areas and drainage plans all are included on these plans. The conclusion for this process is called *Engineering Approval*.
- **SITE CONSTRUCTION:** This is the actual clearing and grading and construction of roads, drainage and storm water facilities for the development. This phase may or may not initiate before completion of Final Plat Review. Typically, developers are required to construct drainage controls prior to Final Plat Approval. The conclusion of this phase is called *Final Construction Approval*.
- **FINAL PLAT REVIEW:** The Final Plat Review process records the subdivision and administratively creates all the new lots and property addresses for which building permits can be issued. The Metropolitan King County Council issues *Final Plat Approval*.
- **MAINTENANCE DEFECT PERIOD:** This is a two-year period following Final Construction and Final Plat Approval during which the applicant guarantees that the site is free of workmanship and material defects and that drainage systems function as they were designed. The maintenance defect period is managed by the King County Departments of Transportation and Natural Resources.

Project management and subdivisions

The first four phases of the subdivision process, Preliminary Review, Engineering Review, Site Construction, and Final Plat Review, will require a project manager. A different project manager will be responsible for each estimate and phase of review, however. The submittal process (es)



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involving the project manager and pre-application meeting for each phase of review is similar to earlier descriptions:

- Pre-application meetings are designed to prepare customers for the application and review process. Since the time required to meet and determine the review costs may vary for each project submittal, project managers initially provide customers with a fee estimate for the pre-application meeting itself. Assuming the customer chooses to proceed, the Project Manager then does the research and preparation necessary to hold a pre-application meeting.
- After the pre-application meeting is finished, the Permitting project manager will finalize a cost estimate for the entire phase of review, again giving the customer the choice of whether or not to proceed. These estimates will propose estimate the maximum charge for the review, provided there are no changes to the proposal or work done out of compliance with King County Code during the review phase. If fewer hours are required, applicants would receive a refund of unexpended charges.
- Customers are responsible for developing and submitting a complete, quality application packet based on the information provided during the pre-application meeting.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND SITE CONSTRUCTION

Why is a project manager required for land use inspections?

The Permitting staff inspects and authorizes the release or reduction of financial guarantees for site work in King County including storm drainage, roads, parking lots etc. Permit types include Formal Subdivisions (Plats), and Administrative Subdivisions (Short Plats), Right of Way Use Permits, Commercial and Residential Building Permits, Grading permits and Recreation and Landscaping related to subdivisions. Project managers are assigned at the Land Use Inspection phase in order to ensure fee/cost predictability and also to assist the developer in staying on task with project timeframes and permit requirements. Although these project managers bill their time to the customer, the Project Management process can actually save customers money in the long run by helping them to avoid costly delays and technical mistakes.

How is a project manager assigned to a land use inspection project?

Project managers for the land use inspection phase of development are generally assigned to projects on a geographical basis. Permitting staff will be assigned to permit issuance. The project manager will then develop inspection hours (cost) and timeframe estimates based on project parameters and site conditions. Depending on the scope of the permit, the project manager may make a site visit prior to developing fee and timeframe estimates. These estimates are given to the customer prior to permit issuance.

Will the project manager conduct the actual site inspections?

No. There will be a separate inspector assigned to do the field inspection work. The project manager will work closely with your inspector, monitoring the project (both in the field and office) for compliance with timeframe and fee estimates.

Who should I be talking to, the site inspector or the project manager?

Developers should interface with the individual site inspector on all routine issues and communications. Project managers should be consulted for any unresolved problems or technical issues during the inspection phase. More than likely, the project manager will be proactively contacting the developer, reminding him/her of upcoming deadlines and technical requirements, which, if met, will keep the project in line with original fee and timeframe



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estimates. If conditions or timelines change during construction, the project manager may need to re-estimate the inspection fees.

Other bulletins and telephone numbers that may be helpful

Bulletin 1	Building and Development Permit Telephone Numbers
Bulletin 17A	Zoning Code: Overview and Summary
Bulletin 18A	Zoning Code: Permitted Use Tables
Bulletin 21	Critical Areas Review
Bulletin 26	SEPA Process
Bulletin 28	Clearing and Grading Permits
Bulletin 40	Financial Guarantees

These and other Permitting bulletins are available via the Permitting Web site at www.kingcounty.gov/permits.

206-296-6600	Permitting Services Center
206-296-6760	Permitting pre-application meeting appointments

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